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Michael F. Easley
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 Secretary, DENR

‘WORLD’S EDGE’ LAND SET ASIDE

A 1,568-acre tract in the Hickory Nut Gorge of Rutherford County, known as “World’s Edge” has been purchased jointly by the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy in the hope that it will become a key component of a new state park.

PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY APPROVES INITIAL FUNDING FOR PARK AT HICKORY NUT GORGE. STORY ON PAGE 12.

The conservation partners announced closing on the property Aug. 9 in a short ceremony at Lake Lure.

“Acquiring this magnificent property is a triumph for our region’s people and our natural heritage,” said Kieran Roe, executive director of Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy. “With development pressures on the rise, opportunities to protect significant lands such as ‘World’s Edge’ are becoming rare.”

The former owner, Robert Haywood Morrison, died in March and the land was put up for sale. A developer immediately made an offer, conservancy officials said.

The two conservation groups combined to make a counter-offer to Morrison’s estate, arranging financing and loan guarantees from the Open Space Institute, the Self-Help Credit Union and a number of private donors.

The property is commonly called “World’s



THE 1,568 ACRES THAT IS ‘WORLD’S EDGE’ OFFERS MORE THAN 20,000 LINEAR FEET OF STREAMS.

Edge” because of its location at the lip of the Blue Ridge Escarpment which provides stunning views of the piedmont falling away to the east.

“It’s basically where the mountains meet the piedmont and because of that, the views are incredible,” said Jim Proctor, the mayor of Lake Lure, who has hiked the property regularly.

The property offers a mile-long series of steep slopes on the escarpment and more than 20,000 linear feet of streams and waterfalls. It is home to unique cave-dwelling invertebrates, rare wildflowers, a variety of forest communities and an

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**THIS EDITION OF *THE STEWARD*
 SPONSORED BY
 FRIENDS OF JOCKEY’S RIDGE**

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

Robert Gardner was hired at the Yorkshire Center as the division's first Radio Engineer. He has an associate's degree in general education/information systems and more than 20 years of directly related work experience.

Kelly Hoover has joined the staff at South Mountains State Park as a Park Ranger I. She has a bachelor's degree in biology from Lenoir-

Rhyne College and more than a year of related work experience.

Crystal Kinsey was hired with administration/human resources as an Accounting Clerk IV. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration/human resources from Peace College and more than three years of work related experience.

Charles Wilder is a new Park Ranger I at Mount Mitchell State Park. He has a

bachelor's degree in geography and environmental science from Morehead State University and more than two years related work experience.

Crystal Dillard was hired at New River State Park as a Park Ranger I. She has a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from N.C. State University and two years experience with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Charles Zidar was hired at the Yorkshire Center as an Art Exhibit Technician. He has a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Ohio State University and more than nine years of work-related experience.

Charlie Parks was promoted to a Maintenance Mechanic II at Kerr Lake State Recreation. He has more than eight years of work experience with the division as a general utility worker and assistant park ranger and has also worked as an apprentice.

Matthew Schnabel has joined the staff at South Mountains State Park as a Park Ranger I. He has a master's degree in parks, recreation and tourism from Clemson University and worked more than two years as an assistant park ranger and science teacher.

Yancy King was hired to work with operations as the division's safety officer. Yancy was promoted from the North Carolina Zoological Park and brings with him more than 16 years experience in safety.

Raymond Reavis was promoted to a Maintenance Mechanic IV with New River State Park. He has more than 10 years of related experience with the division, Wilkes County Schools and Yadkin Valley Ford.

From The Director's Desk

Among the reports in this edition of *The Steward* are a number that deal with visitor services in our state parks. They cover subjects such as the more accessible observation platform planned for Mount Mitchell, summer learning programs at Lake Waccamaw and a new webcam that Jockey's Ridge State Park is hosting for the Friends of Jockey's Ridge. We also touch on our campground host program and the long-range plans now being made for expanded visitor facilities at Lake James.

Certainly a far-reaching new development in terms of visitor service is an internet-based reservations system for campgrounds, picnic shelters, cabins and other park facilities. It promises to be one of the more complex projects proposed for the state parks system, involving upgraded internet access for the parks, regional call-in centers, sophisticated inventory controls and seamless internet links. We were preparing to implement a new reservation system in 2001, thanks in large part to a N.C. Dept. of Commerce grant. However, it was deferred when the state budget deficit required other considerations.

A reservations task force is currently writing a "request for proposal," the document that will invite bids from companies who have operated similar services in other states and for national park services in the United States and Canada. We're committed to launching a quality reservations system in the 2006 season. It's the one amenity most requested by our visitors.

There are a number of other initiatives underway. One is an economic impact study (EIS) of our State Parks system. We're pleased to have worked out arrangements with the Parks Recreation and Tourism Department at N.C. State University to complete the EIS. Another is a comprehensive overhaul of our website. Thanks in large part to Tom Howard, in the early 1990s North Carolina was one of the very first park systems to have a web presence. A third is the grants confirmed for new communications equipment from the US Dept. of Homeland Security and the Governor's Crime Commission. We'll share more of the details on these and other projects in future editions of *The Steward*.

It's important to take advantage of new technology, opportunities and studies when they offer ways to better serve the public and manage North Carolina's "goodliest lands." But, it's also always important to mix them with a simple spirit of helpfulness that's long been a hallmark and tradition in our state parks.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

NUNEMAKER LEAVES LEGACY AT RIDGE

By Majid Elbers
Friends of Jockey's Ridge

Dreams do come true. On the anniversary of the passing of Carl P. Nunemaker, Jr., and thanks to an endowment fund established in his honor for Friends of Jockey's Ridge, a website camera has been positioned to monitor Jockey's Ridge State Park.

Live and minute-by-minute, the largest living dune in Eastern North America can be viewed by logging onto the Friends of Jockey's Ridge website, www.jockeysridgestatepark.com, and selecting "Web Cam."

From images before and after hurricanes to hang gliding and children rolling down the hill, all will be available to view and for data storage from this unique monument of nature.

Nunemaker earned the right to be called the "Godfather of Jockey's Ridge" during his lifetime. His years as commissioner and mayor of the Town of Nags Head embroiled him in a major controversy to ward off development of the famous dune. Together, he and Carolista Baum waged a war against all odds to create Jockey's Ridge State Park to preserve this natural wonder for generations to come.

At the time of his death, Nunemaker's family and friends established an endowment fund for the friends group in honor of his service to the community. At the subsequent death of his beloved wife, Sally, more memorial donations were contributed to make the fund viable for grants to Jockey's Ridge State Park projects.

For the Nunemaker legacy, the vision to monitor the "living dune" phenomena is now happening.



VIEW FROM THE NEW WEBCAM AT JOCKEY'S RIDGE.



CARL P. NUNEMAKER, JR. AND HIS WIFE, SALLY. NUNEMAKER WAS MAYOR OF NAGS HEAD AND A STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF JOCKEY'S RIDGE STATE PARK.

Grants from the Carl P. Nunemaker Endowment Fund and support from Charter Communications will allow the web cam project to continue in the future. Special thanks also go to Friends of Jockey's Ridge Board of Directors members Jim Northrup and Nora Yacobi for assisting with setting up the technical components of the web cam.

Friends of Jockey's Ridge, also established in part by Nunemaker, is a non-profit support organization, which provides free environmental programming and financial support for Jockey's Ridge State Park, which welcomes more than one million visitors annually.

The visitor center at the foot of the dune includes an exhibit hall with natural history displays and an auditorium, partially funded by monies raised by Friends of Jockey's Ridge along with matched funding from the Outer Banks Visitor's Bureau.

For Jockey's Ridge State Park programs and events, also visit the friends website, www.friendsofjockeysridge.com.

The Carl P. Nunemaker Endowment Fund is established through the North Carolina Community Foundation. Additional donations and bequests can be directed to the fund at any time through Friends of Jockey's Ridge, PO Box 358, Nags Head, NC, 27959, or directly to the North Carolina Community Foundation (Currituck-Dare Division) by calling 252-491-8166. For any additional questions, contact Billy Moseley, president of Friends of Jockey's Ridge.

TEN NEW PARK RANGERS COMMISSIONED

Ten new state park rangers received commissions as law enforcement officers June 27. The rangers were sworn by Judge Kimberly S. Taylor of Alexander County in a special ceremony at the state parks system's headquarters in Raleigh.

Receiving a commission as Special Peace Officer at the end of 17-week basic law enforcement training is generally regarded as the last formal step before a ranger takes on full duties in a unit of the state parks system. During the training period prior to commissioning, a ranger is assimilated into the park and begins assuming duties in resource management and visitor service.

"It requires a lot of dedication and training for our candidates to earn the right to wear the campaign-style hat of a state park ranger," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "These men and women are true multi-specialists who are frequently asked to assume many roles during a day at work, from finding a lost hiker to giving an interpretive program to dealing with violations of state law."

Judge Taylor gave the group some advice about dealing with stress and avoiding burn-out as law enforcement officers. She said that young officers need to set life priorities, and that family should be the top priority.

Taylor advised the rangers to keep a sense of humor and also to remember that, when in court, they'll be educating everyone about state parks and how state laws are enforced in the parks.



THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY FOR THE RANGERS WAS HELD IN RALEIGH.



The rangers were congratulated by superintendent of state parks Susan Tillotson, who added, "This comes at the end of 17 long weeks for the 10 of you. We know those days were difficult, not only physically but emotionally as well. This commission brings with it authority, responsibility and risk as well."

The rangers who received commissions are: Susan Rone Ashley at Lake James State Park; Justin Mark Barnes at Hammocks Beach State Park; Jason Michael Brown at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area; Philip Harrison King at Medoc Mountain State Park; Matthew Robert Hanes at Hanging Rock State Park; Brandy Elizabeth

Mangum and O'Kelly Hall Safley, both at Falls Lake State Recreation Area; Brock Harris Martin at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area; Thomas David Randolph at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area; and, Rebecca Lyn Wilson at Raven Rock State Park.

The division also recognized rangers who won awards during their time at the various law enforcement training venues. King won an academic award and was recognized as "outstanding overall cadet." Martin was presented a physical fitness award, and Safley was presented an academic award.

State park rangers are required to have at least a two-year degree, and many come to the job with four-year university degrees in curricula related to resource and/or park management. Beyond law enforcement training, all are trained in medical first response, search-and-rescue, wildfire suppression, natural resource management, interpretive skills and environmental education.

MOUNT MITCHELL TO REPLACE TOWER

A new, low-profile, fully accessible observation platform will soon replace the aging concrete tower at the summit of Mount Mitchell.

The circular platform, presenting a 360-degree view of the surrounding Black Mountains, will become the sixth structure to crown the 6,684-foot peak. And, it will become a new focal point for Mount Mitchell State Park, the oldest state park in the Southeast.

The existing 30-foot-high tower was built in 1959. Although it is open to visitors, engineers have determined that its structural concrete is failing due to age and exposure to the extreme climate on the peak.

The \$700,000 project will also include extensive renovation to the 850-foot walking trail to the summit from the park's main parking area. The trail will be realigned slightly and paved and will have intermittent "rest areas" with benches along the route.

"The construction of various observation structures on the peak has been part of Mount Mitchell's history," said Lewis Ledford, division director. "To replace the existing structure, we sought a design that is in harmony with the area's beauty, which fits comfortably in the natural contours of the mountain, which is accessible to all visitors and will allow for scenic vistas from the highest peak in eastern America."

The division explored the possibility of repairing the existing structure, but determined it would be cost prohibitive since it would have involved installing an elevator to make the tower accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Ledford said.

Vaughn and Melton Engineers of Asheville created the



ARTIST'S RENDERING OF NEW OBSERVATION PLATFORM PLANNED FOR PARK.

design for the new observation platform. The structure will be 10 feet tall and 36.5 feet in diameter, with a curved and gently sloping ramp for access.

The 135-foot ramp, supported by circular columns will make the platform fully accessible. A stonework façade is meant to serve as a visual connection to the heritage and history of the existing tower and those that were erected before it.

A special feature will be a map of North Carolina set into the walking surface of the central observation area. A geodetic survey monument at the appropriate location on that map will mark the significance of the highest point east of the Mississippi River.

The central observation area will also offer benches and interpretive displays.

Funding for the observation platform, trail improvements and demolition of the existing tower was allocated from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the primary funding source for state park capital improvements and land

acquisition. The trust fund is supported by a portion of the state's tax on real estate deed transfers.

Bids for the project will be sought this fall, and division officials are hopeful that the existing tower can be demolished this year, perhaps as early as September, to ready the site for new construction in the spring of 2006.

Since the late 1800s, when logging on the mountain began to give way to tourism, there has been some type of structure on Mount Mitchell's summit.

In 1888, a 12-foot-high bronze monument was placed to mark the grave of Dr. Elisha Mitchell, a UNC geology professor who died in 1857 while trying to verify the mountain's elevation. By 1915, a ladder about 15 feet high stood mounted on three poles that formed a pyramid-shaped base.

In 1916, at the time Mount Mitchell State Park was created, the state built a covered wooden platform about 15 feet high. That was replaced in 1926 with a stone tower in a medieval design motif.



RIGHT, BEGIER BEGINS DRILLING A NESTING CAVITY IN A LONG LEAF PINE AT SINGLETARY LAKE. ABOVE, A RED COCKADED WOODPECKER IN A NEARBY CLUSTER.



JUST LOOKIN' FOR A HOME

It's something like "Extreme Makeover" in a wildlife habitat sort of way.

Wildlife biologist Jenna Begier descends on a stand of long leaf pines with an immense power drill and a belt stuffed with hand tools to try to give red cockaded woodpeckers a head start on a new home.

On this day, she's at Singletary Lake State Park looking for a mature tree of just the right girth. About 15-20 feet off the ground, she drills two holes. The upper hole is drilled at a downward angle into the tree's heartwood. The second is angled upward to intersect the first channel, hopefully creating a dogleg entrance into a cavity that's protected from weather and the tree's sap.



RIGHT, AN OLDER CAVITY IS MONITORED USING AN ANGLED MIRROR. BELOW, BEGIER GETS HELP WITH EQUIPMENT FROM PARK RANGER CLAY VEASEY.



It usually takes Begier three or four hours to do it right. It can take a woodpecker up to two years to accomplish, so that's why she's helping.

"There's a reason these woodpeckers are endangered. They're so specialized," notes Angelia Allcox, park superintendent.

Colonies of the rare bird are successful only if the homes look right, feel right and are situated in good long leaf habitat with sparse understory.

Once drilling is done, Begier plugs and putties the upper hole.

"I scrape back the bark to give it a reddish color and I may paint it (red) to attract their attention. And, hopefully, the birds then get in it and do their own work," she said. "Ultimately, we'd like the birds to do all this themselves, but the hurricanes hit and a lot of good trees got wiped out."

Through the Wildlife Resources Commission, she works in several state parks as well as gamelands and other conservation lands.

An alternate method involves cutting a square hole into a large tree and inserting a pre-fabricated box. Each method has its advantages, she said.

Since new woodpecker family groups branch off from established clusters, researchers can use manmade cavities to gradually direct birds to prime – and protected – habitat.

The cavities are monitored regularly to see if they're active or try to determine a reason for failure. A relatively small percentage of the manmade cavities are adopted by the birds.

Park ranger Clay Veasey said park staff can often only wait and watch. "We try to do a little mechanical enhancement as far as prescribed burning and clearing out an area, but there's not much else we can do."

A FAMILY ENJOYS THE CAMPGROUND AT NEW RIVER STATE PARK. A RESERVATIONS SYSTEM, PARTICULARLY ONE THAT IS INTERNET BASED, IS ONE OF THE SERVICES MOST REQUESTED BY VISITORS TO STATE PARKS.



TASK FORCE EYES RESERVATIONS SYSTEM

A task force of the Division of Parks and Recreation is in the initial stages of planning for an internet- and telephone-based reservations system for campsites and other facilities in the state parks system.

The task force began in early summer by hearing presentations from national companies who would operate the reservations system on a contract basis in return for a premium added to the fees for campsites, cabins, picnic shelters and community buildings.

The division hopes to launch a system in 2006. Implementation of the system had been planned for 2001, but was postponed due to a state budget deficit. At that time, economic uncertainty caused all state agencies to reconsider whether to offer new services.

Division director Lewis Ledford launched the initiative and directed Susan Tillotson, superintendent of state parks, to lead the 19-member task force, which includes district superintendents, park superintendents and administrative staff.

"We concluded long ago that a reservations system is needed in North Carolina's state parks, and the technology and the companies that provide this service have matured in recent years to the point where it's feasible," Ledford said.

Currently, reservations are only accepted for weeklong stays at the system's recreation area campgrounds and for cabins, picnic shelters and community buildings. Also, they can only be made in person or through the mail with payment by check.

"A reservations system is one of the amenities most frequently requested by our park visitors," Tillotson said. "It's pretty stressful for a family to pack up and travel two or three hours to a state park on a Friday evening with no assurance they'll find an available campsite when they arrive. And, more people than ever are using the internet for vacation planning."

There are only a handful of companies that offer a turn-key approach to reservations systems. The two principal providers are ReserveAmerica, which operates such systems for 14 states, and ReserveWorld, which serves seven states and the National Park Service. The task force is also investigating Mediamix Interactive, which serves Parks Canada, and Friend Communications, an internet services company in California.

Most often, the contractors offer reservations through two avenues. A call center (or network of centers) accepts reservations via toll-free calls. There, a corps of contractor employees is specially versed in a state's parks system and in its inventory of campsites and amenities.

Or, visitors can go directly to the contractor's web site and make a reservation unassisted. These sites often use maps of each park's campgrounds and instantly reflect which campsites are available. Each campsite in a park system must be inventoried along with some description of its features – for instance, its distance from bathhouses, parking or waterfront and its suitability for tents, trailers or RV's.

Also, the systems allow "walk-up" visitors

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CONCEPTS DEVELOPED FOR LAKE JAMES

LandDesign, the Charlotte planning and landscape architecture firm charged with drafting a new master plan for Lake James State Park, has developed three alternative concepts for facilities development.

The park's long-range master plan is being rewritten to encompass 2,915 acres acquired earlier this year from Crescent Resources Inc. The master plan will essentially be a blueprint for facilities development at the park over the coming decades. The plan is to be formally presented to the division in the spring of 2006.

The three alternative concepts, explained through maps and text, have been posted on the division's website, www.ncsparks.net. (From the home page, click "Visit a Park" and navigate to the Lake James State Park main page.)

The state and Crescent Resources reached agreement last summer to add the land to the state park for \$18.36 million, well below its appraised value. The acquisition was completed in January and expanded the state park to six times its former size and allows the conservation of more than 30 miles of lakeshore. The purchase was made possible through the use of certificates of participation backed by future revenues to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

"The state parks system wants to consider carefully the type and the extent of development at Lake James State Park because park development will affect the



A NEW SWIM BEACH IS LIKELY TO BE ONE OF THE RECREATION PRIORITIES AS A NEW MASTER PLAN IS WRITTEN FOR LAKE JAMES STATE PARK.

community as well as conservation and economic development efforts in that region," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation. "An important part of that process is to solicit and consider public comment."

LandDesign developed the three alternative concepts following public meetings held in Burke and McDowell counties in April.

Among other things, the concepts address proposed locations for the park's main entrance and visitor center, types of campgrounds and recreation facilities that are to be developed and a proposal for some acreage to be reserved for foot traffic and non-motorized boating.

One of the central recreation components is likely to be a swim beach along the north shore of the lake. The park's existing swim beach is small, being restricted by steep terrain, and is extremely crowded in hot-weather

months.

The principal components of the three concepts are:

Concept A: main entrance near Canal Bridge; visitor center on NC 126; RV/trailer campground on Paddy Creek peninsula; pedestrian bridge linking Paddy Creek and Long Arm peninsulas; tent campground near swim area; equestrian facilities at Long Arm entrance.

Concept B: main entrance near SR 1238; visitor center centrally located on Paddy Creek peninsula; trailhead parking within Long Arm peninsula; no RV/trailer campground; no equestrian facilities; tent campground at Long Arm entrance; tent campground near group camping on Paddy Creek peninsula.

Concept C: main entrance near Canal Bridge; visitor center centrally located on Paddy Creek peninsula; no

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GROUPS JOIN FOR PARK CLEANUP EFFORT

By Staff

Merchants Millpond State Park

At Merchants Millpond State Park there have been several areas that were badly in need of cleanup.

One site consisted of an old homesite where refrigerators, truck bed, tires and mounds of assorted trash were buried under wisteria and privette, an invasive plant species. This site also contained several foundations, a block building and a refrigeration trailer.

Another area, one that was just recently purchased, contained a dump site. Hundreds of old tires, washers, dryers, refrigerators and miscellaneous trash had been deposited here over the years.

Recently the park has begun to clean these areas. A three-acre patch on NC 158 has been cut down to remove invasive plant species and trash. Thanks to assistance from the Division of Solid Waste, the Solid Waste Authority, the county landfill and the Gates County Correctional Center, the park has been able to clean these areas at little cost to the parks system.

Before the assistance of these agencies, the cost of this cleanup had been estimated at



DISCARDED TIRES AND OTHER TRASH WAS DISCOVERED UNDER A COVERING OF INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES.

\$20,000. We were able to remove approximately 40 tons of waste and three acres of invasive plants from these sites.

This process enabled the park to begin to aggressively remove invasive species and trash. We are extremely grateful to those who have helped.

RESERVATIONS

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to make or amend reservations at the state parks, which have computers dedicated to that purpose.

Even though it's considered a "turnkey" system, the division still must make many decisions about its business practices. That will allow the reservations system to be tailored to North Carolina's state parks system's particular way of operating.

Those include such questions as: what minimum and maximum stays are allowed with reservations; what are cancellation policies; how far in advance can a reservation be made; how does a park staff keep current on reservations; and should fees be added on a per-reservation or a per-night basis.

Tillotson stressed that although the task force will consider the business practices and problems encountered by other state parks systems, decisions will be made that are best for North Carolina's parks. The research may involve visiting one or more call centers and perhaps watching the start-up of a new system, she said.

Once most of the decisions about business practices are made, the task force must write a "request for proposal". Basically it's an invitation to bid that specifies in some detail how North Carolina's reservations system is to work and how it is to be promoted.

LAKE JAMES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

RV/trailer campground; no equestrian facilities; tent campground at Long Arm entrance; tent campground near group camping on Paddy Creek peninsula.

The division's web site also includes instructions on how to submit written comments regarding the concepts.

During the master planning process, LandDesign will also consult with the park's staff and its citizens park advisory committee as well as the division's planning, natural resource protection and park operations teams.

VOLUNTEER HOBSON LEWIS, A RETIRED US NAVY CORPSMAN, NOT ONLY SERVED AS A CAMPGROUND HOST AT HANGING ROCK STATE PARK, BUT FOUND OTHER WAYS TO HELP AROUND THE PARK AND ACTIVELY RECRUITED OTHER VOLUNTEERS. (PHOTO BY HOLLI HARRIS)



VOLUNTEER FINDS MANY WAYS TO SERVE

By Ranger Jason Anthony
Hanging Rock State Park

With nearly 7,000 acres to manage and approximately 350,000 visitors a year to serve, the staff at Hanging Rock State Park is extremely grateful for the many volunteers who donate their time and talents every year to help make each person's stay at the park a more memorable one.

This spring, the staff at Hanging Rock State Park bid farewell to Hobson Lewis, one of their many distinguished volunteer campground hosts, after six years of service.

A retired senior chief hospital corpsman with the U.S. Navy, Lewis served his country 22 years, three of which were spent with the Marines during the Korean War. After the military, he worked for 24 years as an administrator of healthcare facilities for a private company before settling down with his wife Nancy at their home in Washington, NC.

At Hanging Rock, a camp host comes and stays in the campground for one month between March and November. Though individual campsites at the park do not have water and electrical hookups, the volunteer site is equipped with these conveniences, and camp hosts usually bring an RV to live in for the month.

Their primary job while volunteering is to register the campers in both campground

loops (73 sites total) and to sell them firewood as needed.

When asked what he liked most about working at Hanging Rock, Lewis responded that the highlight was getting to talk with people from all over the country and invite them over for coffee and popcorn. He also said that the quality of the staff at the park made his time there enjoyable.

Besides doing the duties of a campground host, Lewis assisted the park in many other ways. He helped out in the office answering phones and contributed one item to the park system's Natural Resource Inventory Database, a photograph of Hanging Rock's black bear taken from inside his trailer.

Lewis has also told many of his friends about the volunteer program and has so far recruited three other camp hosts interested in serving at the park. Lewis' efforts in recruiting volunteers will be evident at Hanging Rock for many years to come.

When asked about why he enjoyed registering campers, Lewis responded, "My wife says I love to tell other people what to do. I guess that's due to all those years in the Navy."

The staff at Hanging Rock State Park will miss Hobson and Nancy's yearly visits and is thrilled to have new and returning camp hosts call the park every year to volunteer. For each of them, their time at Hanging Rock is time well spent.

WACCAMAW OFFERS SUMMER LEARNING

By Alex Lew, Student
Duke School for Children

It's 6 a.m., and, looking out onto the lake, you can already see a group of about a dozen seventh graders paddling out to watch the beautiful sunrise on a set of six red canoes.

Contrary to what you might think, these students are not on summer vacation. They are enjoying a fun-packed field trip to Lake Waccamaw State Park, one of the many interesting places that the students of Peter Reichert and Carol Olausen's seventh grade class at Duke School for Children got the opportunity to explore this year.

"Anytime you experience something firsthand, you get much more out of it," said science teacher Reichert. "In terms of science, I'd say it's the best field trip I've ever done with kids."

The kids agree. From waking up at six in the morning to board the canoes and watch the beautiful sunrise, to taking a three-hour hike in the woods, everything was full of fun, educational experiences only possible at Lake Waccamaw. But did it accomplish everything that classroom lectures could not?

"I think so," seventh-grader Katie Jackson said. "It was fun and educational. I learned that Lake Waccamaw has three species of fish that no other lake has."

Classmate Chris Roberts said, "The park rangers and the staff were very welcoming. The classroom facility was kind of nicer than our actual classroom."

Not everything was completely education-based, though. A fun time was had by all, whether making "s'mores" around the campfire or eating the tasty food



STUDENTS COLLECT AND IDENTIFY SPECIES DURING THEIR FIELD TRIP.

made by Olausen. Everything on the trip was memorable.

So how did the education fit in? Three hours a day were devoted to a science program. The 25-student class was divided into two groups. One group would go to the lake with park superintendent Chris Helms and ranger Shane Freeman.

After wading for an hour or so with hand nets trying to catch as many creatures as possible, the class used books to identify them and learned about the variety of fish that live in Lake Waccamaw.

Afterwards, the kids got into the park-provided canoes and paddled around the lake for an hour or so. On the way, many interesting things were caught, including a turtle and a fish endemic to Lake Waccamaw.

Meanwhile, the other half of the class was out on a fun and educational hike with their teacher, Reichert. Lake Waccamaw, according to Reichert, is a "unique and fascinating ecosystem that contains high diversity and contrast over a relatively small area."

The students were able to observe this diversity themselves, collecting data that would later be discussed in class. The hike was scattered with helpful signs, explaining the high contrast in the environments over even just a few feet, or with information about prescribed burns.

Although this was the first year that students were able to experience the magic of Lake Waccamaw State Park, Reichert and Olausen are enthusiastic about the possibility of going again.

"Where else can you catch fish that only exist in one location in the entire world using a hand net?" Reichert said. "Having access to the classroom facility in the visitor center, the hiking trail along the edge of the lake, and the lake itself made the location irresistible."

Going there, being part of the experience, and getting to see things firsthand made the visit to Lake Waccamaw State Park better than any classroom lecture. That's the kind of science we should be doing in the classroom and the kind of science that kids remember for a lifetime.

INITIAL FUNDING FOR GORGE PARK OK'D

Initial funding to purchase land for a new state park at Hickorynut Gorge in Rutherford County was approved by the Parks and Recreation Authority in July.

The authority set aside a minimum of \$902,190 from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for land acquisition in the gorge area, largely in response to a pledge from a private donor to match up to \$1 million of funds earmarked by October 1.

New state parks at Hickorynut Gorge and at Carvers Creek in Cumberland County were authorized in the 2005 legislative session. That action sets the stage for land acquisition. The Nature Conservancy has property in both locations that could figure prominently in the creation of new parks.

The trust fund monies for Hickorynut Gorge will come from three sources:

- \$402,190 in unallocated funds for fiscal 2005. This is largely revenue that exceeded projections when the authority made land acquisition commitments in October and March.

- \$500,000 reallocated from a project at Falls Lake State Recreation Area. The authority was told that negotiations for that acquisition project were at impasse.

- An as-yet unknown amount – likely more than \$100,000 – in unspent administrative funds for fiscal 2005. The authority agreed to allocate all unspent administrative funds to the Hickorynut Gorge project.

Carol Tingley, chief of planning and natural resources, told the authority that this initial funding may be directed to two

tracts on Rumbling Bald Mountain near the western tip of Lake Lure. The property includes some of the gorge's most popular rock climbing areas.

The state parks system will also request funding from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund in its fall funding cycle for Hickorynut Gorge.

And another partner in the state park effort, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy is requesting a grant from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

For the full year, the trust fund has generated \$14.2 million for state park land acquisition, which represents the conservation of more than 6,000 acres.

A like amount was also set aside for state parks capital improvement projects.

Sixty-five percent of trust fund revenues – generated from the state's tax on real estate deed transfers – is set aside for parks land acquisition and capital improvements. Thirty percent is granted to local governments for recreation projects. And, five percent supports coastal beach access.

The authority also approved six capital projects in July, totaling \$1.9 million. That money includes unallocated funds for 2005 as well as re-allocation from projects at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area and Merchants Millpond State Park. The projects are:

- \$313,000 for interim development at Elk Knob State Natural Area in Watauga County. The project will include improvements to an entrance road, 12 picnic sites, a parking area, a contact station, utilities and trail improvements to the summit.

- \$177,984 to replace the

LOCAL PARK PROJECTS GET PART F FUNDS

The Parks and Recreation Authority awarded \$2.9 million in grants to 14 local governments for parks and recreation projects during its July meeting at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area.

That is in addition to \$10.8 million in 36 grants awarded in May. The July awards represent fourth-quarter revenues into the trust fund.

Although the trust fund generated a record \$13.7 million for local grants in 2004-05, the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

Campbell Creek pedestrian bridge at Raven Rock State Park in Harnett County that was destroyed by flooding.

- \$568,000 for design and rehabilitation of existing structures on recently acquired land at Mayo River State Park in Rockingham County. This will include restoration work on a picnic shelter and a cooking shelter designed by architect Antonin Raymond, a protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright at what is locally known as the Old Mayo Park property. The project also includes a contact station, canoe access, utilities and maintenance compound.

- \$150,000 to repair a boat ramp at Lake Norman State Park in Iredell County.

- \$240,000 for design of a boat ramp area at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area in Vance County.

- \$402,190 for restoration of the Loop and Big Sandy trails at Stone Mountain State Park in Wilkes County.

PART F GRANTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

demand by city and county governments outstripped the money available. Applications came from 85 local government units and totaled \$24.9 million in requests.

Jonathan Howes, authority chairman, told the handful of local government representatives at the meeting, "We appreciate the time you spend in preparing the applications. I know this funding is very meaningful to your programs. On the other hand, we are very mindful of the fact we don't have as much money as we have demand."

The July grants ranged from \$34,300 for a municipal park in Stallings in Union County to \$500,000 for an athletic park in Granville County. The grants must be matched dollar-for-dollar by the local governments.

One third of this year's grant applications were for the maximum amount of \$500,000. The maximum was raised just this year from \$250,000.



A HOUSEBOAT LOANED FOR THE OCCASION ALLOWED AUTHORITY MEMBERS TO TOUR KERR LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA.

Thirty percent of the trust fund is earmarked for the local grants program. The trust fund is supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers and also funds state park land acquisition and capital projects and coastal beach access.

Among this year's applicants, 63 percent were municipalities and 26 percent were counties. There were two

applications from city/county partnerships. Seventy-two percent were for park development, and there were applications for land acquisition totaling 744 acres.

Since the trust fund was established 11 years ago, the authority has distributed grants totaling more than \$72 million to 772 applicants in 98 of the state's 100 counties.

FRIENDS DEDICATE 14.5 MILES OF TRAIL

On May 14, the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST) designated 14.5 miles of the trail along the Blue Ridge Parkway from Devils Garden Overlook to NC 18.

This section also includes the Bluff Mountain Trail through Doughton Park on the parkway. FMST volunteers worked more than five years to make this trail section a part of North Carolina's flagship trail system.

Lewis Ledford, director of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, remarked on his appreciation for the

volunteer effort that is making the Mountains-to-Sea dream come true. The FMST is now working on the next segment from NC 18 to NC 16 and will continue building trail to Blowing Rock.

On June 5, the FMST received word that the parkway segments of the trail have now received National Recreation Trail status, which will help the Mountains-to-Sea Trail acquire more grant money and take another step towards becoming a National Scenic Trail. The FMST looks forward to applying for National

Recreation Trail status for more sections.

Currently, the Mountains-to-Sea Trail goes through seven state parks across North Carolina. More recently the focus has been placed on an eastern segment of the trail from Raleigh to New Bern. This 250-mile corridor has been outlined in the Mountains-to-Sea Trail East Plan document, which is available by contacting Darrell McBane, state trails coordinator (919-846-9995).

For detailed information, visit the FMST website at www.ncmst.org.

HICKORYNUT GORGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

array of wildlife such as endangered bats, salamanders, peregrine falcons and migratory neotropical birds.

The non-contiguous property lies to the south of US 64 and west of Lake Lure and, at one point, adjoins the private Chimney Rock Park. The tract extends into Henderson, Polk and Rutherford counties.

State Sen. Walter H. Dalton of Rutherford County, a primary co-sponsor of legislation that authorized a state park, said, "I'm pleased that so many local conservation partners are committed to working with our Division of Parks and Recreation to create a new state park in Hickory Nut Gorge. The increased recreation and tourism opportunities will strengthen the local economy and provide many benefits to the people of North Carolina and to visitors from other states."

The 2005 legislation – which also authorized a state park at Carvers Creek in Cumberland County – sets the stage for the state parks system to enter negotiations for land acquisition and to develop a financing strategy for "World's Edge" and other properties at both locations.

"We've been excited about the idea of a state park at Hickory Nut Gorge for a long time, and that idea has moved from possibility to probability in just a matter of weeks," said Lewis Ledford, division director. "It shows what can be accomplished with such committed partners as The Nature Conservancy, the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, the local community and the General Assembly."

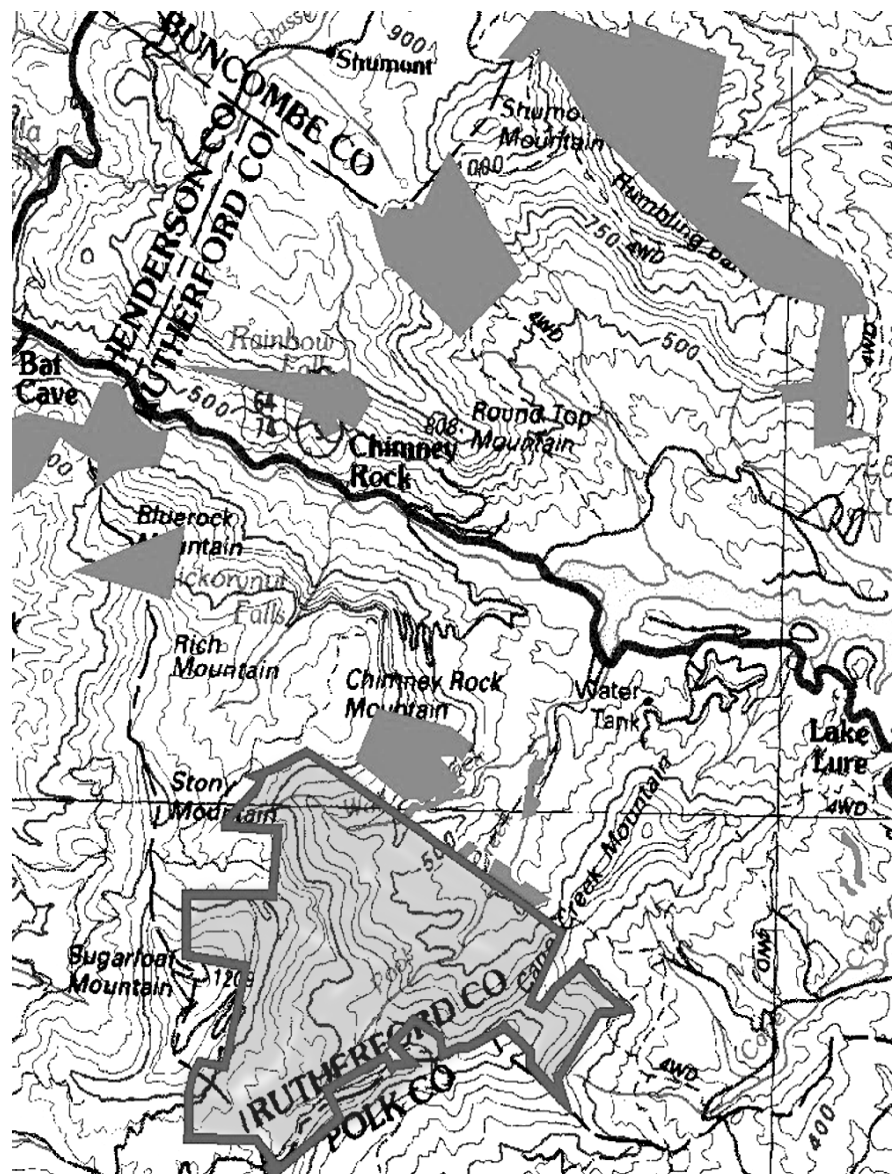
The division and the conservation groups will, in coming months, be making applications to

the state's three conservation trust funds for the project – the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Ledford said that the progress of planning and developing a new state park depends almost entirely on the pace of land acquisition. Once core property for a new park is acquired from willing sellers, the master plan and initial development phase can generally take three to four years.

Both conservation organizations have had a strong presence in the gorge for years. The Hendersonville-based Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy had already protected about 700 acres in the area.

The Nature Conservancy holds title to nearly 1,500 acres, including the spectacular Rumbling Bald Mountain to the north of "World's Edge" and Lake Lure. That tract of about 850 acres could also eventually be a component of the new state park.



LIGHTLY SHADED AREA AT BOTTOM DEPICTS 'WORLD'S EDGE'. OTHER SHADED AREAS ARE TRACTS PROTECTED BY THE NATURE CONSERVANCY.

North Carolina State Parks

Monthly Attendance Report, July 2005

PARK	JULY 2005	TOTAL YTD JULY 2005	JULY 2004	TOTAL YTD JULY 2004	% CHANGE (2004/2005)	
					JULY	YTD
Carolina Beach	33,090	154,718	39,383	150,743	-16%	3%
Cliffs of the Neuse	12,931	61,346	20,536	81,572	-37%	-25%
Crowder's Mountain	29,115	208,280	43,275	217,457	-33%	-4%
Eno River	32,634	197,209	28,567	177,648	14%	11%
Falls Lake	151,716	584,961	124,616	480,980	22%	22%
Fort Fisher	127,065	460,233	135,749	496,083	-6%	-7%
Fort Macon	187,008	761,144	228,876	885,810	-18%	-14%
Goose Creek	17,089	88,920	12,703	88,930	35%	0%
Gorges	25,230	79,509	26,286	82,233	-4%	-3%
Hammocks Beach	19,089	86,427	19,053	89,451	0%	-3%
Hanging Rock	59,857	217,282	47,314	189,190	27%	15%
Jockey's Ridge	181,542	590,046	157,347	555,505	15%	6%
Jones Lake	8,390	48,809	12,088	65,518	-31%	-26%
Jordan Lake	168,932	953,159	165,823	627,558	2%	52%
Kerr Lake	272,344	1,118,616	295,320	1,032,572	-8%	8%
Lake James	64,729	249,480	80,890	258,073	-20%	-3%
Lake Norman	61,350	294,624	55,416	284,796	11%	3%
Lake Waccamaw	10,822	56,986	13,676	60,958	-21%	-7%
Lumber River	5,950	34,796	7,053	38,694	-16%	-10%
Medoc Mountain	8,340	29,072	7,434	33,524	12%	-13%
Merchant's Millpond	25,380	138,564	20,145	112,560	26%	23%
Morrow Mountain	33,130	122,090	41,990	177,050	-21%	-31%
Mount Jefferson	8,633	42,317	13,237	52,573	-35%	-20%
Mount Mitchell	43,309	108,071	80,606	264,713	-46%	-59%
New River	25,123	80,883	25,852	91,947	-3%	-12%
Occoneechee Mountain	4,802	31,415	3,241	22,931	48%	37%
Pettigrew	9,519	47,112	9,081	49,251	5%	-4%
Pilot Mountain	44,683	229,125	44,419	214,818	1%	7%
Raven Rock	8,736	65,237	10,165	63,359	-14%	3%
Singletary Lake	5,838	27,078	5,770	23,451	1%	15%
South Mountains	18,884	124,344	896	32,478	2008%	283%
Stone Mountain	51,852	225,668	58,000	253,504	-11%	-11%
Weymouth Woods	3,702	25,852	3,511	26,666	5%	-3%
William B. Umstead	62,288	355,184	54,971	309,480	13%	15%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	1,823,102	7,898,557	1,893,289	7,592,076	-4%	4%

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

SAFETY ZONE **Put Safety Into Action**

✓Be aware of the five ergonomics risk factors: repetition, forceful exertions, awkward posture, contact stress and vibration.

✓Take periodic short breaks for intense keyboard work or other repetitive tasks.

✓Consult your doctor if you develop persistent pain, swelling or stiffness, especially in the hands, feet, legs, neck or back.



The Steward

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